

the habit of the mind. Recollect your own experience. After witnessing some remarkable transaction, or some new and strange department of life and manners, or some striking disclosure of character, or after listening to some extraordinary conversation, or impressive recital of facts, you may have been conscious that what you have heard or seen has given your mind some one strong determination of a nature resulting from the quality of that which has made the impression. It is true, that your receiving the effect in this one manner implies the existence of an adapted predisposition, for many other persons might not have been similarly affected; yet the newly-acquired impulse might be so different from the former action of your mind, and at the same time so strong, as to give you the consciousness of a greatly altered moral being. In the state thus suddenly formed, some of the previously existing dispositions had sunk subordinate, while others, which had been hitherto inert, were grown into an imperious prevalence : or even a new one appeared to have been originated.* While this state continues, a man is in character another man ; and if the moral tendency thus excited or created, could be prolonged into the sequel of his life, the difference might be such, that it would be by means only of his person that he would be recognized for the same ; while an observer ignorant of the cause would be perplexed and surprised at the change. Now this permanence of the new moral direction might be effected, if the impression which causes it were so intensely powerful as to haunt him ever after; or if he were subjected to a long succession of impressions of the same tendency, without any powerfully opposite ones intervening to break the process.

You have witnessed perhaps a scene of injustice and oppression, and have retired with an indignation which has imprecated vengeance. Now supposing that the image of this scene were to be revived in your mind, in all its odiousness, as often as any iniquitous circumstance in society should present itself to your notice, and that you had an entire persuasion that your feeling was the pure indignation of virtue ; or, supposing that you were repeatedly to witness

* So great an effect, however, as this last, is perhaps rarely experienced from even the most powerful causes, except in early life.